

# **PeaceBuilders**

## **Brief Program Description**

PeaceBuilders is a school-wide violence prevention program for elementary and middle schools (K-8). The program incorporates a strategy to change the school climate implemented by staff and students and is designed to promote prosocial behavior among students and adults. Children learn five simple principles: 1) praise people; 2) give up put-downs; 3) seek wise people; 4) notice and speak up about hurts we caused; and 5) right wrongs. Adults reinforce and model behaviors at school, at home, and in public places.

The underlying theory is that youth violence can be reduced by initiating prevention early in childhood, increasing children's resilience, and reinforcing positive behaviors. It is also hypothesized that aggressive behavior can be reduced by altering the school environment to emphasize rewards and praise for prosocial behavior. PeaceBuilders includes four components: 1) Parent Education; 2) Marketing to Families; 3) Collateral Training; and 4) Mass Media Tie-Ins.

## **Program Strategies**

Nine broad behavior-change techniques are used: 1) common language for "community norms;" 2) story and live models for positive behavior; 3) environmental cues to signal desired behavior; 4) role plays to increase range of responses; 5) rehearsals of positive solutions after negative events and response cost as "punishment" for negative behavior; 6) group and individual rewards to strengthen positive behavior; 7) threat reduction to reduce reactivity; 8) self- and peer-monitoring for positive behavior; and 9) generalization promotion to increase maintenance of change across time, places, and people.

These strategies are designed to change school climate (the everyday interactions of students, staff, and families).

## **Population Focus**

PeaceBuilders is targeted toward students in grades K-5.

## **Suitable Settings**

This intervention is suitable for implementation in a school setting.

## **Required Resources**

Peacebuilder participants are guided by the following materials: 1) "I Help Build Peace" story/workbook; 2) an action guide and planner for teachers; 3) reproducible binders for teachers, staff, and community volunteers; 4) principal and staff guides; 5) parent education events and tools teaching specific family management tactics; 6) symbolic incentives (e.g., t-shirts, pencils, stickers, and erasers); and 7) mass media components.

## **Implementation Timeline**

Training for PeaceBuilders has six phases: 1) pre-intervention orientation lasting one hour; 2) training workshop where staff at each site receive 3-4 hours of training on the PeaceBuilders model; 3) site coaching at each study site during the first 8-12 weeks lasting at least two hours; 4) study sessions lasting 30-60 minutes; 5) periodic forums; and 6) occasional one-day institutes.

## **Outcomes**

Evaluation of this program revealed the following:

- From August 2000 through February 2001 there was an 89% decrease in physical aggression.
- There was an 82% decrease in verbal aggression from February to May 2000.
- When visits to the school nurse were analyzed, results indicated that between 1993-1994 and 1994-1995, the rate of weekly injury-related visits per 1000 student days significantly decreased by 12.6% in the intervention schools with no significant change observed in the control schools.
- Rates of confirmed fighting-related injuries did not change significantly in the intervention schools but significantly increased 56.0% in the control schools.

## **Contact Information**

For indepth information on this program, please use the contact listed below.

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